

1. The one word I use to summarize Chapter 15 is “misconceptions”.
 - a) Chapter 15 tells 3 stories:
 - i) Some Pharisee’s accusing Jesus of violating Jewish customs;
 - ii) The story of a Gentile woman begging Jesus to heal her daughter
 - iii) The story of Jesus feeding 4,000 men, plus women and children.
 - b) Each of these sections is designed to teach the disciples (and us!) lessons about what following Jesus is all about and some lessons about what it is not about.
 - c) In any religion, there is the danger of pre-conceived notions about what to expect.
 - i) A related topic is the danger of “tradition”. Church traditions can be dangerous as people can focus more on the tradition than on what the Bible teaches.
 - ii) The next issue is the danger of “pre-conceived interpretations” of the bible being the correct doctrine.
 - a) Jesus is the final authority on the interpretation of Scripture.
 - b) One of the rules of bible interpretation, including the Old Testament is: What does Jesus himself say on that issue?
 - (1) We’re going to come across an issue like that in today’s lesson.
 - c) The second story in this chapter is partially designed to teach the disciples a lesson about the role of the Messiah and the non-Jewish (i.e., “Gentile”) believers.
 - d) The final story (the feeding of the 4,000) is also taught to teach us that Jesus came to help Gentile as well as Jewish believers.
 - (1) One of the things you will notice about the feeding of the 4,000, when we get to that section, is the setting is non-Jewish.
 - d) One has to remember that Matthew’s Gospel was written primarily to Jewish Christians.
 - i) They had their own preconceived roles about God’s relationship with Jewish people and non-Jewish people.
 - ii) Matthew’s Gospel is designed to present Jesus as the true Messiah.
 - iii) Part of that description is to clear up and change preconceived notions about just what the Messiah is and what He is not.
 - e) The main application to you and me, is the about the dangers of misconceptions.
 - i) We as church going Christians can get stuck in preconceived notions about Jesus and what he expects of us.
 - ii) A big reason for studying the bible is to show what Jesus exactly does expect of us and what was the purpose of both his first coming (past) and second coming (future).
 - iii) Religious “tradition” is just as much a danger today as it was in Jesus time.
 - a) We’ll cover that more as we go.
 - f) With the idea of the “danger of misconceptions” in view, let’s go to Verse 1.
 2. Verse 1: Then some Pharisees and teachers of the law came to Jesus from Jerusalem and asked, ² “Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? They don't wash their hands before they eat!”
 - a) Let’s start by reviewing some of the events of the previous chapter:
 - i) Jesus just feed the 5,000 men, plus women and children in the wilderness.
 - ii) The disciples then sailed back across the Sea of Galilee. Jesus walked on the water and met the disciples in the middle of that sea.
 - iii) In the last few verses, we read of the disciples landing in Gennesaret, which is near the northwest area of the Sea of Galilee. The local people saw Jesus, brought out their lame and sick, and Jesus did some more healing.

- b) Now we read of Pharisees and law-teachers coming to Jesus from Jerusalem.
 - i) Remember the Sea of Galilee is in the north-region of Israel.
 - a) Jerusalem was some-distance away, to the south.
 - ii) I suspect by now, the word of Jesus healing and miracles had reached the religious leaders in Jerusalem.
 - iii) By this point the religious establishment may have acknowledged Jesus as a miracle worker. Earlier in the gospels he has already condemned some of the religious leadership as did John the Baptist.
 - iv) At this point in Jesus ministry, we're not sure yet the Jewish leadership fully rejected Jesus or they were still just "checking him out".
 - v) As a reminder, the Pharisee's were a religious sect of Judaism. They are the most conservative of all the "denominations" that were around at that time.
 - vi) A "teacher of the law", often called a scribe in the bible was not necessarily a Pharisee. A modern equivalent of a "teacher of the law" might be a seminary professor. It simply refers to one who is well educated in the Old Testament and teaches others the doctrines.
- c) Notice that these Pharisee's and Law-Teachers ask Jesus, "Why do your disciples' break the tradition of the elders by not washing before they eat?"
 - i) First of all, we're not talking about sanitary washing.
 - a) In Mark's Gospel, Mark goes on to explain that the washing refers to a specific ceremonial washing. (Mark 7:3-4)
 - b) Matthew's Gospel was written to a Jewish audience; therefore Matthew didn't feel the need to explain that "washing" meant ceremonial washing.
 - c) The specific washing was a specific method of how the hands were to be washed. It involves the position of the hands and arms as the water is poured unto the hands.
 - ii) As to the washing itself, this is based on Jewish tradition. For many centuries prior to Jesus, the Jews had a set of official commentaries on the Old Testament called the "The Oral Tradition". Within 100 years after Jesus, these commentaries were written in a set of books known as the "Mishna" and the "Talmud".
 - a) To this day Orthodox Jews study the Mishna and Talmud.
 - (1) Don't worry; you don't have to remember those words. ☺
 - b) These books are commentaries by Rabbi's on how to interpret the Bible.
 - c) They often have contradictory opinions, as to show different views.
 - d) Like all good bible commentaries, a lot of it is good practical advice and some of it is bad interpretation. Given the fact that parts of these books are contradictory to other parts indicates in itself that it is not God-inspired and they should be read accordingly.
 - (1) On a similar note, one should read all bible commentaries, including this one with a "grain of salt". The bible itself is the final authority, not any commentary.
 - (2) It is ok to read commentaries. Remember they are opinions and not scripture themselves.
 - (3) I myself strive to use the bible itself as my authority in interpretation and application. It is also important to state that when something is "my opinion" or "scholars disagree" to emphasize that point as I try to do.
 - (a) Ray Steadman once quipped, "When the angels want a good laugh, they read the commentaries on the Bible."
 - (b) OK, I've drifted way off topic here. How did I do that? ☺

- d) The Pharisee's and Law teachers didn't accuse Jesus of this "crime"; they accuse the disciples of not washing in the traditional manner of the Jews.
 - i) One wonders why they put the question in that format?
 - a) Were they afraid of asking Jesus himself why he didn't wash that way?
 - b) Did they just see the disciples' wash and not Jesus wash this way?
 - c) If they are accusing the disciples of this charge, then they are accusing Jesus of the same charge in a roundabout way.
 - d) Since they knew Jesus was their leader, they were accusing Jesus of violating this tradition by either not teaching it to the disciples or teaching them to ignore that principal.
- e) The application to you and me is the danger of church traditions.
 - i) By the time any denomination of the Christian church is established for a while, the danger of denominational tradition comes into play.
 - ii) Beware of church traditions that are not based on a biblical event or scripture.
 - a) If a church has a ritual or teaches an action that does not come from the bible directly then it is a church tradition.
 - b) One has to learn to separate "church traditions", from bible-based ideas completed in the church.
 - c) For example, I don't have a problem with taking one day out of the year to celebrate Jesus birth (i.e., a Christmas service).
 - (1) There are a few chapters in the bible dedicated to the birth of Jesus as well as a few Old Testament references.
 - (2) Therefore, I don't have a problem picking one day or even one week out of the year to study those passages.
 - d) One can pick other examples such as the Lenten season.
 - (1) This is a tradition as based in the Roman Catholic Church that have a set of religious services set up around 40 days prior to Easter.
 - (2) The problem is there is no biblical reference to anything special about the 40 days prior to the resurrection.
 - (3) Roman Catholic defenders argue that all of the "symbols" of Ash Wednesday (start of Lent) represent events leading up the Cross.
 - (4) The problem with that idea is I can pick any ritual and make it biblical. We can play "pin the tail on the donkey" and say, "Jesus is the donkey and the pins are our sins being placed on Him". ☺
One can pick any ritual and allegorize it to be "Christian".
 - (5) When the Reformation happened centuries ago, the motto was "Sola Scriptura" which is Latin for "Scriptures Alone!"
 - (a) The idea was for the church to get back to what the bible taught and not the traditions of the church.
 - iii) The reason I am making such a big deal about this is that I have seen churches get away from bible teaching and overly emphasize church traditions.
 - a) There are so many Christian churches where their traditions start off nicely and then becomes an obsession to their members.
 - b) I have seen people leave churches because they "don't like the style of music" or they don't like the bible version being taught.
 - c) They develop a dogmatic view that it is "our way or the wrong way".
 - d) The key is the bible itself. It is ok to disagree with possible bible interpretation. The danger is getting away from the Scripture in order to emphasize church tradition.
 - e) If you study the word "tradition" in the New Testament, it is never used in a positive light.

- f) If you study church history, you will discover that all the great revival movements always occur outside of any traditional denomination. This is often because denominations start to get obsessed with their own rules, regulations and interpretations to the point where they can't be used by God for any great new movement.
 - g) OK, time to calm down and get off my soapbox. Back to the scripture! ☺
- 3. Verse 3: Jesus replied, "And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition?" ⁴ For God said, 'Honor your father and mother' and 'Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.' ⁵ But you say that if a man says to his father or mother, 'Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is a gift devoted to God,' ⁶ he is not to 'honor his father' with it. Thus you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition.
 - a) Notice Jesus never answers their question.
 - i) They ask Jesus about why don't the disciples keep the Jewish hand-washing ritual.
 - ii) Jesus turns around and takes it to a "higher level" by accusing them of having their traditions nullify the word of God. We'll talk more about that in a minute.
 - iii) Whenever you read of somebody accusing Jesus of violating a Jewish or Roman law, you see Jesus "take it up to a higher level" and ask the accuser a question.
 - a) My application is "you can't put Jesus on trial" in the sense of saying he violated some or any biblical commands.
 - (1) "God made him (Jesus) who had no sin to be sin for us" (2nd Corinthians 5:21a, NIV)
 - b) Whenever Jesus is "put on trial", he usually turns it around and puts the accuser himself on trial. That is the situation here.
 - b) Jesus responds by showing how another of their traditions violates God's law.
 - i) First of all, Jesus is quoting Exodus and Deuteronomy.
 - a) "Honor your father and mother" is a quote of Exodus 20:12 or Deut. 5:16.
 - b) "Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death" is a quote of Exodus 21:17 or Leviticus 20:9.
 - ii) Next, notice Jesus says in Verse 4 "For God said".
 - a) Jesus is acknowledging Exodus, Leviticus and Deuteronomy, as being written by God, which means it is the Word of God.
 - b) Occasionally, you will here someone say that the God of the Old Testament is not the God of the New Testament. Jesus refutes that argument.
 - iii) It might help to explain the specific Jewish tradition Jesus is talking about.
 - a) The Bible clearly teaches that we are to honor our mothers and our fathers. This is one of the 10 commandments.
 - b) A proper application of that commandment has to do with financially taking care of their parents.
 - (1) Paul himself taught this 1st Timothy Chapter 5 in his discussion about providing for widows of the church. The underlying message of that section of 1st Timothy is about how Christians need to be financially responsible for their parents.
 - c) There was a view given in the official Jewish commentary. It goes as follows: If one had money and one wanted to not give it to their parents, they could declare that money "For God's use". It is a pledge to give that money to the (Jewish) "church" and therefore, they were not obligated to help their parents.
 - (1) It was a "legal loophole" to get out of supporting your parents.
 - (2) Jesus point is that this interpretation (their "tradition") violated the commandment of honoring the mother and father.

4. Verse 7: You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you: " `These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. ⁹ They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.' "

 - a) Notice Jesus calls these Jewish experts "hypocrites".
 - i) The word "hypocrite" derives from the Greek word for acting. It essentially means that your words do not match your actions.
 - ii) When we get to Chapter 23, Jesus specifically calls them hypocrites 7 times!
 - a) So much for "having respect for difference of opinions." ☺
 - iii) The only people Jesus ever criticized or put-down were the religious leaders.
 - a) He held them more accountable than the common people of that day.
 - b) It is a reminder to those of us who teach that bible that God himself holds us more accountable based on what we know and to teach it properly.
 - b) Verses 8-9 are a quote of Isaiah 29:13.
 - i) The translation is not verbatim as the New Testament is Jesus quoting the Greek translation of the Hebrew, and then to English. The Old Testament is directly from the Hebrew to the English. Thus, there are a few technical word differences.
 - ii) The quote is the same. I suspect since Jesus is talking to the Pharisee's, he either quoted directly from the Hebrew or the common Greek translation of that day.
 - iii) Reading the Isaiah quote in Isaiah itself, Isaiah was talking about the Jewish people who were living at that time, roughly 600 years earlier.
 - a) Isaiah was preaching that the people of his time were hypocritical in their worship of God. They were going through the rituals, but their hearts were not in it.
 - b) Notice in Verse 7 Jesus says Isaiah "prophesied about you".
 - (1) Jesus is saying that Isaiah wasn't just talking about the people of his time, but Isaiah was making predictions about the future.
 - (2) Remember, Jesus is the final authority on Scripture.
 - (3) Much of the Old Testament is designed to point to Jesus.
 - (a) Some of it, as in this Isaiah passage, even points the people and events surrounding Jesus.
 - iv) When Isaiah predicted, "their hearts were far from me" it would refer to how the Jewish religious leaders would not comprehend Jesus when he came.
 - a) It is not about the sincerity of the religious leaders.
 - b) One can be very sincere in one's beliefs and be sincerity wrong.
 - (1) You can be very sincere in your intention and effort to rob a bank, but it doesn't make the action right.
 - c) Having sincerity in one's religion is not enough to get you into heaven.
 - d) That is the point Jesus is getting at. They went through their religious practices but missed the main point about the Messiah coming for the forgiveness of their sins.
 - e) The modern application is the churchgoer who "goes through the motions" of coming to church, but never applies biblical application to their lives. They read or hear the Word of God, but it doesn't change their personal lifestyle. That is the idea behind Isaiah's quote.
 5. Verse 10: Jesus called the crowd to him and said, "Listen and understand. ¹¹ What goes into a man's mouth does not make him `unclean,' but what comes out of his mouth, that is what makes him 'unclean.' "

 - a) The accusation by the Pharisee's is now the point of a lecture to the crowd.
 - b) Remember where not talking about "germs-unclean" This is about "ceremonial-unclean"
 - i) When Jesus is talking about "clean" it is a reference to our "heart".

- c) One can get into the whole topic here about foods Jews were not supposed to eat.
 - i) In Mark's Gospel, Mark adds the editorial comment: "In saying this, Jesus declared all foods "clean."" (Mark 7:19b, NIV).
 - ii) There is a set of laws given in Leviticus about types of land animals, birds and fish the Jews are supposed to eat and which ones they are not. (See Leviticus 11)
 - iii) Jesus point is that the religious Jews became more obsessed with their traditions they did about their behavior.
 - a) Notice this verse: He (God) has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God. (Micah 6:8, NIV)
 - b) The point of Micah and Jesus is God's requirements of us focuses on our behavior far more than what we say or our "religious actions".
 - iv) Remember that Matthew's Gospel was primarily written to the Jewish reader. This is why the emphasis is on what is ceremonial "clean". A Jewish person would understand what the word "clean" meant based on the Leviticus food laws.
 - a) Mark's Gospel is primarily to the non-Jewish reader. This may be why Mark said "Jesus declared all foods clean". It is to show the Gentile believer that it is not necessary for them to follow the Jewish food-laws.
 - b) Do I think a Christian who is from a Jewish background should still not eat certain foods? It is not a requirement. For a Jewish Christian, I believe God does call on them to keep some of the Old Testament rituals only to remember God's covenant relationship with the nation of Israel. It has nothing to do with their salvation with Jesus.
 - v) The most important thing to remember is perspective. Jesus is teaching it is what comes out of the mouth (words leading to our behavior) have greater emphasis than the foods we put in our mouth.
 - vi) Remember my theme for this lesson is "misconceptions".
 - a) To many religious Jews, what they eat and other traditions have (or had) greater meaning than their actions.
6. Verse 12: Then the disciples came to him and asked, "Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this?"
- a) One of the hardest things to grasp by becoming a born-again tradition is to get past your religious traditions and upbringings.
 - b) For example, many Roman Catholics look at their top-ranks of bishops and cardinals as being "more-special" than they are. I am not saying they are bad people. I am talking about the mistake of putting religious leaders on a pedestal because they study their bible more or have been given "rank" by individual churches.
 - c) The disciples were a bunch of fisherman. The Pharisee's knew their bible backwards. It had to be intimidating for the disciples to challenge the Pharisee's.
 - d) Intimidation can be dangerous in our Christian witness. We can easily be afraid to talk to a "scholar" or a "holy-man" about Jesus because we are intimidated by their education.
 - i) When I was a young-Christian, I had a religious Jewish friend who would give me lots of arguments why Jesus is the not the Messiah. Some of those arguments sounded impressive and at that time, I didn't know how to refute them.
 - ii) Somehow, I knew the guy was wrong, but didn't know how to refute his claims. The good news is God reassured me through those times to "stick with it" and not be bullied by intimidation. It was not "my job" to convert everyone, just to be a witness for Jesus.

7. Verse 13: He replied, "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be pulled up by the roots. ¹⁴ Leave them; they are blind guides. If a blind man leads a blind man, both will fall into a pit."
- a) Well, so much for Jesus trying to save everybody. ☺
 - b) To summarize, Jesus said we are to leave these Pharisee's alone.
 - c) That means there were people Jesus didn't waste his time trying to convert.
 - d) Here is a case where Jesus' knowledge of people's heart is greater than ours.
 - i) There are religious people destined for hell, as stated in these two verses.
 - ii) We don't know who is and isn't saved, but God the Father does. This is why God calls on us to pray for all people. (Reference: 1st Timothy 2:4)
 - iii) At the same time we have to accept the fact that many people, out of their own free will, will not choose to accept Jesus.
 - iv) God the Father knows who will be saved and who won't. We don't have that knowledge, and therefore, we pray for all people.
 - v) The application to you and I is "don't worry about everyone". We as Christians are each given special abilities. God expects us to use those abilities to serve him. Some are called to help in a specific church. Some are called to work with a specific family or a specific age group. Some are missionaries to specific location. The point is we are to focus on what God called us to do and not waste our time doing what God does not call us to do.
 - a) The corollary is if you feel led to pray or witness to a stranger, go ahead. Don't put God in a box and say, "My job is only for this specific group and I can't help anyone else".
 - b) My point here is "don't major on the minors and minor on the majors". Focus primarily (not completely) on what God has called you to do.
8. Verse 15: Peter said, "Explain the parable to us." ¹⁶ "Are you still so dull?" Jesus asked them. ¹⁷ "Don't you see that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and then out of the body?" ¹⁸ But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these make a man 'unclean.'
- a) I always love when Jesus answers a disciple's question. It makes my job easier. ☺
 - b) Remember the word "clean" here refers to clean in a ceremonial sense.
 - c) I've already discussed Jesus' explanation of "don't worry about food". To summarize, Jesus main point is that what "comes out of the mouth" is far more important than the things we eat. With that, its time to move on to the next verse.
9. Verse 18 (again): But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these make a man 'unclean.' ¹⁹ For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. ²⁰ These are what make a man 'unclean'; but eating with unwashed hands does not make him 'unclean.' "
- a) The one new clause in this set of verses is Jesus' emphasis on "the heart".
 - i) First of all, we're not talking about the physical heart, as in the organ that pumps blood. We know Jesus is not literal, as the heart-as-an-organ cannot be blamed for murder, adultery, etc.
 - ii) The "heart" in Jewish thought, represents our innermost being.
 - a) It is the same as when we say, "I really feel this is the best course of action.
 - b) A similar idea is when we say, "My gut tells me to do this."

- b) These few verses are a good summary of the “Sermon on the Mount”.
 - i) In Chapters 5-7 of Matthew, Jesus gave one long sermon. Bible scholars have nicknamed that sermon, “The Sermon on the Mount”.
 - ii) When you go through that speech section by section, one of the underlying themes is that our actions begin with our attitudes. Jesus dealt with such things as how we pray, how we fast, our actions toward others keys on our attitude.
 - a) If we do religious acts for “attention-sake”, we have the wrong attitude.
 - b) If we do such actions *solely* to glorify God, we have the right attitude.
 - iii) What we have in Verses 19-20 is similar to the Sermon on the Mount theme.
 - iv) All the sins of our lives begin in our hearts (or “guts” or “feelings” etc.)
 - v) We manifest those thoughts into actions.
 - a) In Jewish thought, a sin begins with the action, not the thought.
 - b) In Christian thought, the sin begins with the thought prior to the action.
 - (1) This is a general rule for Jewish and Christian philosophy.
 - (2) There are exceptions.
 - c) Personally, I’ll take the Christian view here. ☺
 - d) If we can learn the “control the thought” or give that thought to God we can prevent the action from ever happening.
 - (1) “We take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”
(2nd Corinthians 10:5b, NIV)
10. Verse 21: Leaving that place, Jesus withdrew to the region of Tyre and Sidon.
- a) We are about to move on to another story in the same chapter.
 - b) Tyre and Sidon are city-states north of Israel. It is part of modern-day Syria. The point is Jesus is now outside of Israel and away from a predominantly Jewish population.
 - c) Just why Jesus withdrew is speculation, as the answer is not stated.
 - i) Maybe Jesus wanted to get some rest with the disciples in this area.
 - ii) Maybe Jesus needed to get away from the influence of the Jewish based Pharisee’s.
 - iii) Anyway, we don’t know the reason, just the story that followed.
11. Verse 22: A Canaanite woman from that vicinity came to him, crying out, “Lord, Son of David, have mercy on me! My daughter is suffering terribly from demon-possession.”
- a) First of all, you have to notice Matthew’s use of the word Canaanite woman.
 - i) In Mark’s account, he used the more modern description of “The woman was a Greek, born in Syrian Phoenicia.” (Mark 7:26a NIV)
 - ii) Many centuries earlier, when the Israelites were about to first enter the Promised Land, Moses commanded that all the Canaanite’s be removed (killed) from the land (See Deuteronomy 20:17).
 - iii) It helps to read this verse in the perspective of a “condemned Gentile” begging Jesus for help.
 - a) Remember Matthew wrote this to a Jewish audience.
 - b) They understood that a Canaanite woman is not part of the “chosen people”. Jesus helping this woman helped to show a Jewish audience that Jesus is out to reach anyone who calls upon Him.
12. Verse 23a: Jesus did not answer a word.
- a) Sometimes the hardest things for Christians to deal with are when God is silent in answers to our prayers. I take the view that God answers all of our prayers. Sometimes the answer is “no” or “wait”.

- b) Remember that God wants to mature us as believers. God gives us the “no” answer as he knows best for us. Sometimes he wants to teach a lesson to us.
 - i) Often, I have seen prayers answered only after we have exhausted all of our other resources. We pray in the beginning of a situation knowing we have other options. I have seen God do great miracles when there is no other option. That way, God doesn’t have to share his glory with others.
 - ii) Other times, it is a matter of perspective. God may simply want to teach you or others around you some valuable lesson. That may be the reason for the reason for unanswered prayer, as we are going to see in this section.
13. Verse 23b: So his disciples came to him and urged him, "Send her away, for she keeps crying out after us."
- a) Visualize a mother pleading for her son’s life. He is demon possessed.
 - b) She is a non-Jew. She probably heard about “Jesus this miracle worker”. She probably heard the title “Son of David” refers to the Jews Messiah, but has no idea what it means. All she knows is that her son is in pain and she will do anything to change that.
 - c) She pleads to Jesus and to no avail. She pleads to the disciples (implied) and to no avail.
 - d) Notice Jesus did not respond to the disciples’ request to send her away.
 - i) Jesus is trying to teach her and them a specific lesson about the “Son of David” and thus, Jesus does not answer their request to send her away.
14. Verse 24: He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel."
- a) Here is a verse that must be read in context.
 - b) This woman pleaded to Jesus as “The Son of David”. It is a reference to the Messiah.
 - c) The Messiah was sent specifically to Israel, not to the Gentiles.
 - d) It was the rejection of Israel-corporately that Jesus then turned to the Gentiles.
 - i) Remember that God the Father knows all things and knew all this in advance.
 - ii) It does not excuse Israel-corporately. It simply means God knows all things.
 - e) Remember that Jesus does help Gentile believers in the Gospel of Matthew.
 - i) We read back in Chapter 8 about Jesus helping a Roman Centurion.
 - ii) At the end of Matthew’s gospel we will read that Jesus asks that we take the Gospel message “into all the world” as part of the “Great Commission”.
 - f) The point is, until Israel-as-a-nation “officially” rejects Jesus at the cross, he is sent to the Nation of Israel. Individual Gentiles who get saved in the Gospels are sort of a bonus. ☺
 - g) Paul said, “I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.”
(Romans 1:16, NIV)
15. Verse 25: The woman came and knelt before him. "Lord, help me!" she said. ²⁶ He replied, "It is not right to take the children's bread and toss it to their dogs." ²⁷ "Yes, Lord," she said, "but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." ²⁸ Then Jesus answered, "Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted." And her daughter was healed from that very hour.
- a) To summarize, the woman gets her request to have her son healed by responding to Jesus analogy by saying in effect, “Yes, the food is for those at the table. But even the household dogs get to eat the crumbs that fall off the table. I’m not a Jew, and therefore I don’t get to sit at the table. All I ask for is the crumbs that fall off.”
 - i) You have to admit, Jesus “crumbs” are a whole lot better than the bread the world has to offer. ☺

- b) The most important lesson to learn here is that she changed her perspective from “Son of David” to just plain “Lord”. She calls Jesus “Lord” twice in this passage.
 - i) Salvation is all about Jesus being the Lord of your life (See Romans 10:9)
 - ii) Jesus is the “Son of David” to the Jews, but primarily he is Lord to us-Gentiles.
 - iii) The word “Lord” can also mean sir. I’m guessing from the text that her limited understanding of Judaism is that this guy Jesus is their king and as a powerful king, he can help someone who isn’t a member of that kingdom.
 - iv) This is what she meant by “feeding off the crumbs that fell from the table”.
- c) In a typological sense, we are that women.
 - i) We, as Gentiles (assuming the reader is non-Jewish) are condemned by sin.
 - a) Remember, this is a Canaanite woman. To a Jewish reader, this is a tribe that is under God’s curse.
 - ii) We, like this woman plead for the sake of our loved ones to a Jewish God.
 - iii) That Jewish God was sent primarily to the Jews first. The bible is clear on this.
 - iv) But out of God’s love for the world, He has enough blessings for all of us.
- d) Notice Jesus answers her prayers once she has her perspective right.
- e) You get the impression it was Jesus’ intention to answer her prayer all the time.
 - i) First she needed to teach her and the disciples a lesson about perspective.
 - ii) Remember my theme for today’s lesson is misconceptions.
 - iii) This women thought she could approach Jesus as being “The Son of David”. It appears that approach is only for Jews. She can approach Jesus as Lord and was granted her prayer request.
 - iv) The other lesson here is for the disciples. It is to show that God does have compassion for Gentiles who turn to the Lord as well as Jewish believers.
 - a) The lesson of “non-Jews can be saved” is a hard lesson that took a whole generation of Jewish believers to accept. Much of the Book of Acts deals with that topic.

16. We now move on to the next story in this chapter. Verse 29: Jesus left there and went along the Sea of Galilee. Then he went up on a mountainside and sat down. ³⁰ Great crowds came to him, bringing the lame, the blind, the crippled, the mute and many others, and laid them at his feet; and he healed them. ³¹ The people were amazed when they saw the mute speaking, the crippled made well, the lame walking and the blind seeing. And they praised the God of Israel.
- a) In Mark’s account of this same story, we learn that Jesus goes to Decapolis (Mark 7:31).
 - i) In the northeast area of the Sea of Galilee are 10 towns. Decapolis means 10 towns.
 - ii) This is primarily “Gentile Country” and is outside traditional-Israel territory.
 - iii) We even get a clue that this is Gentile-country in Verse 31 as it says, “they praised the God of Israel.” If these were Jews, the verse would have just read “God” as opposed to the God of Israel.
 - b) This is an amazing thing to visualize:
 - i) The word of Jesus spread around the area. “Quick, that Jesus guy is here, bring out the sick and crippled. Let’s see what Jesus will do!”
 - a) Boy, is that an attitude we can learn from!
 - ii) Visualize people without legs suddenly having legs. Picture people blind, or deaf and/or mute from birth suddenly seeing and hearing and speaking as if they were never born with those deficiencies.
 - a) It makes you ponder about people born with such deficiencies. There is always the possibility God is waiting for the moment to heal them when it serves God’s purpose to glorify Him. (God also allows such deficiencies to exist for other reasons. Not all are healed. A topic for another day!)

17. Verse 32: Jesus called his disciples to him and said, "I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. I do not want to send them away hungry, or they may collapse on the way."
- a) I have to admit, it would take a long time for me to get tired of watching these kinds of miracles, no matter how many times it happens. Imagine legs "popping in place" or acquaintances you've known to be blind all of their lives, now seeing. I can see why the local people hung around for three days. I can see the crowd growing day by day.
 - b) This verse could mean that either the locals haven't eaten for three days, or now, after three days, they were really hungry as the food supply is gone.
 - c) The principal here is that Jesus doesn't heal people and say, "Go on your merry way!" ☺
 - i) Even after he performed all of these miracles, he still had compassion on this Gentile multitude and was concerned about their hunger.
 - ii) A great lesson to all of us that Jesus cares about our basic needs as well.
18. Verse 33: His disciples answered, "Where could we get enough bread in this remote place to feed such a crowd?"
- a) You have to wonder why the disciples asked this question. Remember that not too long ago, Jesus just feed 5,000 men, plus women and children.
 - i) Maybe they have short-term memories. Guys forget things quickly. ☺
 - ii) Maybe they were too intimidated to ask Jesus to do that miracle again.
 - iii) I also wonder if the disciples had some prejudice because the multitudes were Gentiles. They could understand Jesus miraculously feeding a large crowd of Jews, but Gentiles? (This is speculation on my part.)
 - iv) Most likely, it was just short-term memory loss. I know how we guys forget! ☺
19. Verse 34: "How many loaves do you have?" Jesus asked. "Seven," they replied, "and a few small fish." ³⁵ He told the crowd to sit down on the ground. ³⁶ Then he took the seven loaves and the fish, and when he had given thanks, he broke them and gave them to the disciples, and they in turn to the people. ³⁷ They all ate and were satisfied. Afterward the disciples picked up seven basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. ³⁸ The number of those who ate was four thousand, besides women and children.
- a) Here is the miracle of Jesus feeding "The 4,000".
 - i) Some really bad liberal commentators argue that both the "5,000" and the "4,000" are the same miracle, but the internal evidence says otherwise.
 - b) This miracle of the "4,000 feeding" had the same methodology as the "The 5,000".
 - i) Jesus is the one blessing the bread/fish and multiplying them.
 - ii) The disciples are the ones distributing God's blessings to the crowd.
 - iii) Like the "5,000" miracle, it is the model for Christian service.
 - a) God provides the resources; our job is just to share it with others.
 - b) We draw on God to provide the resources so we can minister to others.
 - c) In the last chapter, I told you to consider the possibility that the feeding of the "5,000" was a "Jewish thing" and that the feeding of the "4,000" had word-pictures for Gentile salvation. Since we all have short-term memories, let me describe further. ☺
 - i) In the "5,000" miracle, Jesus multiplied five loaves and a two fish. A total of 12 basketfuls were collected of leftovers when everybody was stuffed.
 - ii) In this "4,000" miracle, Jesus multiplied seven loaves a "few" fish. A total of 7 basketfuls were collected of leftovers when everybody was stuffed.
 - iii) The original word for "basket" is different in each story.
 - a) A Jewish "basket" is a small basket.
 - b) Similar to the size of a typical church collection plate. ☺
 - c) The word for "basket" in the "4,000 feeding" is more like the size of a clothes hamper.
 - d) My point is more food was collected this time than last time.

- iv) One thing that popped in my head is, “Where did the baskets come from?”
 - a) I don’t think the disciples, in either the “5,000” or the “4,000” miracle, had a bunch of baskets in their pockets. ☺
 - b) Somebody, or some people happened to have them.
 - c) There just “happened” to be just enough baskets to be used to distribute the bread and collect the leftovers in each case.
 - d) Remember “coincidence” is God working in the background! ☺
 - e) It is another example of how God works in the background of our lives.
- v) With the “5,000”, 12 basketfuls were collected. There are 12 disciples, tying them together. Many also tie the “12” with the 12 tribes of Israel. Either way, the feeding of the “5,000” was a very Jewish thing. ☺
- vi) With the “4,000”, the audience was primarily Gentiles. The leftovers were seven large baskets. What does “7” represent to a Jewish reader of Matthew?
 - a) The number “7” represents completeness or wholeness.
 - b) On the 7th day, God rested from his work (Genesis 2:2)
 - c) The Sabbath, the day of rest is the 7th day of the Jewish week.
- vii) Let’s stand back and get back to the main purpose of Matthew: It is to present Jesus as the promised Messiah of Israel.
 - a) One of the promises is that Jesus will be a “light to the Gentiles”.
 - (1) Indeed He says, ‘It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant To raise up the tribes of Jacob, And to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, That You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth.’” Isaiah 49:6, NIV)
 - (2) This promise is that Jesus will restore the “preserved ones of Israel, a reference to Jewish believers and then (notice the word “also) that Jesus will be a “light to the Gentiles” referring to Gentile believers.
- viii) Now let’s get back to the “5,000 and the 4,000” who were fed.
 - a) There are 12 basketfuls collected from the “no-longer-hungry Jews”
 - (1) This ties to the 12 Jewish disciples or the 12 tribes of Israel.
 - b) There are 7 basketfuls collected from the “no-longer-hungry Gentiles”
 - (1) This ties to the “completed worked” of Gentiles who see the light.
- ix) If all of this sounds confusing, my whole point is that many commentators see the feeding of the 5,000 as being a “Jewish thing” and the feeding of the 4,000 as being a “Gentile thing”.
 - a) If you see that, terrific. If you think I’ve gone off the deep end and am spending way too much time studying my bible, that’s ok too. ☺
 - b) I’m giving you a common interpretation. Remember Matthew is presenting Jesus as the Messiah. He is given primarily to the Jews, but second, to the Gentiles. That is the idea behind looking at both “feedings”.
- x) Remember that my topic for today is misconceptions.
 - a) Many of the Jews think of the Messiah as being for “them-only” and that the Messiah would rule over the Gentiles like a conquered people.
 - b) Jesus is teaching that he is king of the Gentiles, but not as a conquering king, but only to those who freely choose to accept him. Jesus is our king out of our desire to make Jesus our king.
 - c) To the non-believer, Jesus will be king out of force. That is the consequence for those who willfully choose to disobey.
 - d) Well, I hate to stop when I’m on a roll, but there is one more verse. ☺

20. Verse 39: After Jesus had sent the crowd away, he got into the boat and went to the vicinity of Magadan.
- a) Magadan is one of the few places in the bible where archeologists have not yet discovered the exact location.
 - b) The simple point is Jesus finished his ministry to the Decaplois region and it was time to move on elsewhere.
 - c) I notice that Matthew never misses an opportunity to mention whenever Jesus goes off by himself, or at least desires that opportunity. It is as if Matthew doesn't want us to miss the point of Jesus desire for solitude at times to be with the Father.
 - d) On that simple note, I'm running long and it is prayer time.
21. Heavenly Father, we thank you for these teaching lessons about Jesus. Sometimes we forget that God is working in the foreground and background to take care of all of our needs. Like the apostles, help us to trust God as the only resource of our life, as we draw upon you to share the Good News with others. For we ask this in Jesus name, Amen.